



3410-11-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Revision of the Land Management Plan for El Yunque National Forest

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Initiating the development of a land management plan revision for El Yunque National Forest

SUMMARY: El Yunque National Forest, located in Puerto Rico, is initiating the development of a land management plan revision (forest plan) for El Yunque National Forest (NF). A Draft Assessment is being posted to our website. We are inviting the public to help us develop a preliminary “need for change” and a proposed action for the land management plan revision.

DATES: A draft of the Assessment report for the revision of El Yunque NF land management plan will be posted on the following website at www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque by November 30, 2013.

Public meetings associated with the development of the preliminary “need for change” and a proposed action will be announced on the website cited above.

It is anticipated that the Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (which will accompany the land management plan revision for El Yunque NF), will be published in the **Federal Register** around March to April 2014.

ADDRESSES: Written comments or questions concerning this notice should be addressed to U.S. Forest Service, El Yunque National Forest, HC-01 Box 13490, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, 00745-9625. Comments or questions may also be sent via email to

commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us. All correspondence, including names and addresses when provided, are placed in the record and are available for public inspection and copying.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Pedro Rios, Forest Planning Team Leader, at 787-888-1880. Individuals who use telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. (Eastern time), Monday through Friday.

More information on the planning process can also be found on the El Yunque National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to the 2012 Forest Planning Rule (36 CFR 219), the planning process encompasses three-stages: assessment, plan revision, and monitoring. The first stage of the planning process involves assessing social, economic, and ecological conditions of the planning area, which is documented in an assessment report. A draft of the assessment report for El Yunque NF is being completed and will be available by November 30, 2013 on the Forest website at: www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque.

This notice announces the start of the second stage of the planning process, which is the development of the land management plan revision. The first task of plan revision is to develop a preliminary “need for change”, which identifies the need to change management direction in current plans due to changing conditions or other monitoring information. The next task is to develop a proposed action, which is a proposal on how to respond to needs for changes. We are inviting the public to help us develop our preliminary “need for change” and a proposed action.

A proposed action will initiate our compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. A Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the land management plan revision, which will include a description of the preliminary need for change and a description of the proposed action, will be published around March to April 2014 in the **Federal Register**.

Forest plans developed under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 describe the strategic direction for management of forest resources for ten to fifteen years, and are adaptive and amendable as conditions changes over time. The Forest Plan for El Yunque NF was approved in 1997. On August 9, 2012, a public announcement was made that El Yunque NF was beginning to work on the Assessment for revising their Forest Plan. This notice announces the start of the second stage of the planning process, the development of the land management plan revision. The third stage of the planning process is the monitoring and evaluation of the revised plan, which is ongoing over the life of the revised plan.

As public meetings, other opportunities for public engagement, and public review and comment opportunities are identified to assist with the development of the forest plan revision, public announcements will be made, notifications will be posted on the Forest's website at www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque and information will be sent out to the Forest's mailing list. If anyone is interested in being on the Forest's mailing list to receive these notifications, please contact Pedro Rios, Forest Planning Team Leader, at the address identified above, or by sending an email to commentselyunqueplan@fs.fed.us.

Responsible Official

The responsible official for the revision of the land management plan for El Yunque National Forest is Pablo Cruz, Forest Supervisor, El Yunque National Forests, HC-01 Box 13490, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico, 00745-9625.

November 1, 2013

PABLO CRUZ

Date

Forest Supervisor

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